

Nowak

Funeral & Cremation Services



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413.543.1892



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NowakFuneral.com

The Drama Studio: The Right Place for Area Youth to *Act Out*

*N*ydia Gallagher's daughter Rachel was always the enthusiastic type. When she was nine years old, mother and daughter discovered **The Drama Studio** next to the Forest Park Library in Springfield, MA. "She was always a very outgoing kid. **We happened upon The Drama Studio and went to an open house. She absolutely fell in love with it, as do most kids that attend,**" said Nydia Gallagher, Funeral Director at Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services.

"Rachel originally started with one class when she was nine years old, and by the time she was in her senior year of high school, she was taking four to five classes along with auditioning for stage productions. Besides being cast in productions, she was also a stage manager, co-director, did tech work (lights and sound) and other various jobs. Her senior year of high school she also did an unpaid internship," said Nydia.



The Madhatter's Tea Party, from the 2014 performance of Alice in Wonderland at the Drama Studio. Actors left to right: Zach Seyler Lena Iacobucci Catie Williams and Carlie Daggett.

After being involved full time as the parent of a studio actor, Nydia has now spent three years on the Board of Directors for The Drama Studio. This year she is the board President. "I was always volunteering my time while my daughter attended. In years past you may have seen me working the concession stand, now I help the board make decisions and keep the

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The Pioneer Valley Chordsmen is a barbershop chorus based in Chicopee, MA.

Join Us on Friday, February 13th for our First Annual Valentine Luncheon...And Be Our Valentine!

All those who have lost a spouse or partner are invited to remember your valentine with us! On Friday, February 13th, Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services will host our *First Annual Memorial Valentine Luncheon* from 12 to 2pm at the Ludlow Country Club. This event is free of charge. The Pioneer Valley Chordsmen will treat everyone to an a cappella performance, and attendees can enter to win a door prize! **Share in the spirit of love and remembrance by wearing red and pink.**

Please RSVP by February 6th by calling us at 413-543-1892 or emailing ngallagher@nowakfuneral.com. We look forward to honoring your loved one with you.



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Studio functioning effectively. I really believe in what they do," said Nydia.

What do they do?

The Drama Studio employs a *conservatory* style approach to acting training. What that means is that students first attend a series of acting classes over a period of years. While attending classes the students have the opportunity to participate in a number of productions. They must first audition, then rehearse and finally perform. "Normally conservatory style training is reserved for music," informed Drama Studio founder Steve Hays. "We find it effective in acting as well. **It's a unique program for students up to 18 years old. We start a student at age nine in an introductory acting class. Our curriculum embraces acting development, voice and movement training, scene study, improvisation, and writing. Students learn how to express a character they are working on, as well as how to listen, relate and be supportive of another character on stage,**" said Steve.

"Studio programs are after school and weekends, along with vacation and summer intensive programs."

"We draw from all over the county and surrounding communities," commented Nydia. "Studio programs are after school and weekends, along with vacation and summer intensive programs." Twenty seven courses are offered in total between September and May. Five intensive programs are offered during April and over the summer. **Visit www.thedramastudio.org for a comprehensive list of their many classes and tuition options. Scholarship information is also available.** "We maintain an extensive scholarship and financial aid program to ensure that any student who wants to work with us is able to do so," added Dan Morbyrne, Artistic Director at The Drama Studio. Dan has been teaching and directing at the Studio since 2005.

How did it start?

The Studio was formed in 1987 by playwright and musician Steve Hays, along with a group of determined parents and educators who saw the need for quality acting education and performance opportunities in their area. "In a city of this size, we needed a better option for students to study theater," said Steve. His daughter, Amelia Has Rivest, is the Director of Conservatory, and he has two granddaughters in the studio now as well. Since its inception The Drama Studio has produced over 190 plays. The staff boasts educated and experienced actors, teachers, playwrights, directors, choreographers and designers.

"I will always remember my teachers at the Drama Studio for being able to show me what I am capable of," said Rachel Gallagher, freshman at Emerson College. "They have inspired me to further my passion in theater since I was very young. I have been able to train in a wide variety of the theatrical arts and have gained a strong base knowledge of the theater to support me in my further studies," said Rachel. "The techniques my daughter learned at The Drama Studio helped her get accepted into a summer acting intensive at Shakespeare and Company in Lenox, MA," added Nydia.

"The thrust of our Studio is training. Any performance we do is in the name of training. We are training oriented. We may have plays that one might not typically have heard of, but which were picked to help the kids grow as actors." said Steve.

How can you learn more?

An informational program, *The Studio Brunch*, is being held at the Elks Lodge in Springfield on March 1st. "We invite people to attend the brunch and learn more about what we do. The two hour program will consist of a meal, as well as guest speakers and a performance," said Dan. If you are interested in attending please email him at dan@dramastudio.org. "Of course, we welcome inquiries at any time throughout the year."

Community outreach efforts are on-going in the area to expose area residents to the excitement of youth-friendly Studio productions. "One of my favorite outreach activities is our **Touring Program**. It offers wonderful training for our student actors and at the same time, provides one of the only live-theatre experience for children in the Springfield

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Adopting New Traditions When Old Ones No Longer Work

Valentine's Day Can be Difficult for Widows and Widowers

Milestone days and holidays can undoubtedly be difficult after the loss of a loved one. Romance based days such as Valentine's Day are no different, and perhaps even more difficult in some ways. "For a widow or widower, Valentine's day can be especially hard. There are reminders everywhere; in stores selling candy, cards and gifts, on television and social media. Unlike holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas where other family members may be around for support, this day may be lonelier," said Nydia Gallagher, Funeral Director at Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services

Many people start celebrating Valentine's Day as school children when we typically exchange cards and candy with our school-mates. We grow up with a tradition that, whether extensively celebrated or not, marks and affirms our love relationships. It becomes a private endorsement of a relationship for many

couples. And then, when Valentine's Day arrives, fresh on the heels of Christmas and New Year's celebrations and family gatherings, the widow or widower is often left alone wondering why painful emotions are coming up yet once again. These feelings are normal and common. Valentine's Day can be a poignant reminder of a loved one who is terribly missed.

Grief is a personal feeling and you may choose to handle these feelings in a number of ways. It is important to remember, no matter how you choose to spend this day, that there is no right or wrong way to feel or act. Your feelings are a reflection of the relationship you cherished and miss. You may choose to continue traditions on special days, but do so with your children, or a family member or friend. Be aware of what you might want to avoid while making a new tradition or modifying one you shared with our loved one. You may decide to avoid

that "special" restaurant you used to attend every Valentine's Day. Or you may decide to invite your son or daughter, or neighbor or friend to that very place, and share stories of good times you had during this time. It is okay to mourn for your old tradition while still enjoying a new one.

Or, you can choose to start a new tradition. *"At Nowak Funeral and Cremation Services we have created an event to allow widows and widowers to gather and start a new tradition," informed Nydia. "Our Valentines Luncheon will bring together many people in similar situations, and let them share a meal in comfort surrounded in fellowship."*

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school system," said Steve. He went on to elaborate, **"DramaTours was initiated to remedy the lack of theatre performances in the Springfield elementary schools. Due to many roadblocks in the past, most students would never see a play during their elementary school years. In response, we created a touring program called DramaTours and launched the initiative in the 2006-2007 season. Performances are free and simply require a phone call from the school Principal to The Drama Studio.** A 30 minute play is performed, followed by a discussion between actors and audience, led by the director of the play. For the past seven years, the Studio has toured a wide variety of plays (folk tales, tall tales, and poetry revues) and has performed in 30 of Springfield's 31 elementary schools."

"In addition to our touring show, which reaches nearly 3,000 kids in Springfield each year, we also offer a special weekday performance of our December show," said Dan. "This year, we did 2 daytime performances of *Alice in Wonderland* where we provided free tickets for nearly 1,000 children of the city. In the summer, we offer a camp called Stories on Stage (SOS). The focus of this week long intensive is to create theatre from children's literature. In the final days of the program, we further promote literacy by inviting other summer programs for inner-city pre-school age children to bring their students to see the performance," said Dan.

"There are so many interesting opportunities at the Studio for people to learn about," enthused Nydia. The Drama Studio is located inside the St. Barnabas Church building at 41 Oakland Street in Springfield, MA. **To learn more about enrollment, attending a Drama Studio performance, school field trip opportunities or the early elementary literacy program, call (413) 739-1983.**

Frequently Asked Questions

I am interested in pre-planning my funeral; do I have to pay in advance if I do?



An increasing number of people today are pre-arranging their own funerals as well as helping older family members make advance arrangements.

Pre-arranging enables families to consider the various service and disposition options that are available, to ask questions, and to determine what type of funeral best suits the needs and customs of their particular family. During the pre-arrangement conference the funeral director will record your preferences, wishes and desires, and note the information that will be required at the time of death so that family members will not have to worry about those details during a very emotional time. You will have the opportunity to discuss how to create a personalized memorial that will hold special meaning for those in attendance. “I am a certified pre-planning consultant and I strongly believe in pre-planning. Someone can call me and I am happy to sit with them, no charge, no pressure, and give them the information that they need to make the decision that is right for them,” said Nydia.

Pre-arranging provides you the opportunity to compare services, facilities and prices during a time when you are thinking clearly and have the time to consider your choices without pressure. “One of the biggest advantages I find with pre-arranging is alleviating stress from family members. We encounter many family members that are very thankful their loved one pre-planned before their passing, because they wouldn’t have known what to do. We often hear from them ‘*We never talked about it*,’” added Nydia.

Your funeral director can also assist you or your family in considering payment options by providing a cost estimate for the services you are considering. Pre-payment is never required; however, knowing what the costs will be can help you plan accordingly. “If you do not prepay, it does not guarantee costs in any way. However, your preferences are noted so that your family will know what your final wishes are and how you want the funeral to go. Your wishes are honored, whether you want burial or cremation.” said Nydia.

If pre-paying is the right option for you, the funeral director can often help you consider the benefits of payment plans, which are usually not available after a death has occurred. “Because we are able to guarantee funeral home charges, cost is protected from inflation. The sooner you do a pre-payment; you lock in at whatever price you paid and gain a sense of control over an inevitable cost. You don’t have to pay in full, you can do monthly payments. We always work with each individual to do what’s best for them,” said Nydia. For your free consultation, please feel free to contact us at 413-543-1892 or email us at ngallagher@nowakfuneral.com.